

## They Call Her "Madame Mayor"

(Washington, DC) When the gavel sounded on January 4th calling the historic 110th Session of the United States Congress to order, history was made in California's 37th District, as well. Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald who represents that District, became the first African American female to take over the reins of the Committee on House Administration, a mammoth organization that has oversight of all federal elections, and the day-to-day functions of the U.S. House of Representatives. Her role on this prestigious Committee mirrors that of America's mayors who direct and oversee the policies and procedures integral to running their cities.

"There are no more important responsibilities in the "People's House" than ensuring that their ability to vote in free and fair elections is not compromised in any manner, and that their government operates effectively and efficiently. I take my charge very seriously, and have directed my staff to raise the bar on being good stewards of these precious assets," she concluded. The Committee also has oversight of the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institute, the National Zoo, and the Botanic Gardens.

Circumstances have thrust this trailblazer into the limelight once more, as a dispute over the results of the election held in Florida's 13th Congressional District await action by the Committee. Ahead of this issue as well, her early experience has prepared her for the contentious atmosphere that develops when an election is in dispute. While serving as Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration, Millender-McDonald investigated widespread voting irregularities and voter disenfranchisement and called for a hearing in Ohio, the first election reform field hearing in Congressional history.

The Committee on House Administration was instrumental in the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, legislation that has been called the most meaningful improvement in election laws and voting safeguards in a generation. It provides more than \$3 billion dollars for the improvement of voting equipment and procedures to make the voting process more accessible and to guard against fraud.

No stranger to leadership, Congresswoman Millender-McDonald was recently noted in a University of California study as one of the five most effective Members of Congress because of her ability to reach across the aisle to move bipartisan legislation. The role of being first suits her well, as evidenced by her impressive list of accomplishments. She was the first Democratic Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues to take the lead on two groundbreaking meetings. The first was with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to talk about the plight of women globally, and the second was with the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange to develop strategies for increasing women's investments and net worth.

She also convened the first meeting to discuss issues of national importance to women involving Members of Congress and, at that time, the only two females on the Supreme Court, Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Placing action high on her agenda, Millender-McDonald led a delegation of women to meet with then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, taking the Families First Agenda to 35 states across the nation. Also, she was the first African American woman to give the national Democratic response to President Bush's weekly radio address.

In her role as Chair of the Committee on House Administration, Millender-McDonald has laid out a number of priorities:

Electronic Voting machines - The Committee will take action to ensure that every single vote cast in a Federal election is recorded, because we cannot allow our citizens to think that their votes are not counted.

Capitol Police - The Committee will do everything in its purview to make sure the Capitol Police have access to the job training and tools necessary to be the best they can be and to do the best possible job in protecting our people.

Diversity - The United States Capitol should reflect the nation it represents, and that means making diversity a priority.

Franking - Members have had a number of issues with the Congressional Franking process, and The Committee is committed to resolving those issues.

Finally, The Committee on House Administration manages the daily operations that keep the House of Representatives running smoothly. The budget authorizations for expenses of House committees, and those for expenses of Members of Congress, are set by the Committee. Additionally, the Committee is responsible for oversight of the House officers, including the administrative and technical functions of the House.